

BRANCHING OUT

Creating Connections to End Sexual Violence

Spring 2012

Volume 6, Issue 1

Happy Spring!

By Terri DeWalt



We at Sexual Assault Services hope all of you are doing well and enjoying the warming weather. Even though I am grateful for the fact that we had such a mild winter, I am still glad spring is here.

We are only a few months into 2012, and we have already had a busy year. In January we held our second annual fundraiser, Healing Lights: Giving Hope. The event was held at Uncorkt in collaboration with the Wheaton Franciscan Healthcare- All Saints Sexual Assault Treatment Center, and consisted of a wine tasting, amazing food and a silent auction with a wide array of items. We had great attendance and everyone seemed to enjoy themselves. Thank you so much if you attended or contributed to the event in any way. We truly appreciate your support.

As some of you may have read, we entered 2012 with a potential loss of 42.5% of one of our grants, the Sexual Assault Victim Services (SAVS) grant, out of the Department of Justice. Thankfully, due to the support of everyone who contacted their legislators urging them to not allow this cut to go through, the original 42.5% cut was reduced to a still significant, but more manageable cut of 27.5%. Upon hearing about this finalized reduction in funding we were still not sure how we were going to cope with the loss. As a result, we were exceptionally grateful to find out that The SC Johnson Company chose to generously provide us with funding to cover the loss for this year. We are exceedingly grateful to the SC Johnson Company, as this generous act will allow us to continue to provide support to the sexual assault victims in our community without any reduction in services.

As we look forward to the coming months, we are excited to be hosting **Racine County's 9th Annual Take Back the Night (TBTN) on April 26th 2012, from 5:00-7:00 p.m.** The event will begin at 5:00 at the Racine Public Library (75 Seventh St. Racine, 53403) and end with food, refreshments and awareness displays at Olympia Brown Unitarian Universalist Church (625 College Ave. Racine, 53403).

If you have attended our Take Back The Night in the past, you know that it is an opportunity to bring awareness to sexual violence within our community and to give power back to sexual assault survivors and their allies. The event is free and open to all community members. We will have two speakers talk about how sexual violence has impacted their lives and there will be an opportunity for attendees to speak out on an open mic. In addition, we will present the 3rd Annual Sexual Assault Awareness Month Awards to a community professional and a SAS Volunteer Advocate, both of whom contributed to our program in an exceptional way during the past year. The Stars of Courage Project, which consists of hundreds of stars, with each one representing a survivor SAS has worked with over the past thirteen years, will be on display at the Racine Public Library. The Clothesline Project, a collection of t-shirts created by survivors and support people, will be on display at Olympia Brown Unitarian Universalist Church.

If you are interested in making a donation in support of our Take Back the Night, please contact us at 262-619-1634 or via email at tdewalt@lsswis.org. SAS is grateful to the Racine Public Library and the Olympia Brown Unitarian Universalist Church for their partnership in providing this event.

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Rompiendo la Barrera

Breaking the Barrier

By Cassandra De La Rosa

SAS is in Need of Bilingual-Spanish Speaking Volunteers

Here at Sexual Assault Services (SAS) we are continually working to improve the quality of services we provide to the Spanish speaking community. Our goal is to provide culturally competent services to everyone that we see. Spanish speaking victims and their support people have a right to equal services. However, in order for SAS to provide these services we are in need of Bilingual advocates.

In the last issue of Branching Out, I wrote about the Hispanic populations' growth in Racine County. In the article, I stated that in 2010, the Hispanic populations' contribution grew to 11.5% (22,546) of the total population. This is a 50.4% increase for the county as a whole and a 42.8% increase specific to the City of Racine. Although, we are unsure of the percentage of those whose primary language is Spanish specifically in Racine County we can assume that there has been an increase as well. Our goal would be to train the bilingual advocates to respond directly to the hospital when a Spanish speaking sexual assault victim or a support person that speaks Spanish (such as a parent) seeks medical care.

Although hospitals are required to provide translation services to any Spanish-speaking patient or support person, a translator is NOT an advocate. A translator is not trained to understand the dynamics of sexual assault or the trauma that victims and their support people experience, or provide resources and information for the victim. Although, a translator can be compassionate and understanding of the victims, they are not trained to be sensitive to the unique experiences of a sexual assault victim

Having an advocate present makes a great difference even when the victim/support people are only Spanish speaking and the advocate does not speak Spanish. Compassion and support transcends language. However, for a victim, who is already experiencing trauma and confusion, having someone who understands them directly can be extremely comforting. The connection that so often develops between advocates and victims can be more difficult to develop when going through an interpreter. In addition, an interpreter is meant to say exactly what is being said and it can often be difficult to imply the same meaning through translation. For these reasons, we believe that in order to provide culturally competent services we need to have bilingual advocates to respond directly to the hospital when a Spanish speaking victim presents.

We are always looking to recruit new volunteers who are compassionate and willing to support sexual assault victims regardless of whether they are bilingual or monolingual. If anyone is interested in volunteering, or knows of someone who may be interested in volunteering, please contact Katy Adler: 262-619-1634 ext 18.

If you have any questions about our bilingual advocacy program, please contact me at cassandra.delarosa@lsswis.org or 262-619-1634 ext 17. Thank you!

—Cassie

New Dates!

A Multidisciplinary Sexual Assault Training for Racine County Professionals

*October 3rd and 4th 2012
at
CATI: 2320 Renaissance Blvd,
Sturtevant*

**Law Enforcement * DA's Office
Victim/Witness * Healthcare Personnel
Advocates * Social Workers**



This training is designed to demonstrate the benefits of utilizing a collaborative victim-centered and offender-focused criminal justice system response to sexual assault. The training will demonstrate that strong collaboration between community professionals and support for victims throughout the process of investigation can build stronger cases.

**Brought to you by the
Racine County Sexual Assault Response Team**

**For more information, contact Katy Adler
at 262-619-1634 or kadler28@lsswis.org**



Legislative Update

By Vicki Biehn

This has been an active legislative session for the Wisconsin Coalition Against Sexual Assault (WCASA) Policy Specialist and their team. There have been many bills that WCASA supported and that have passed the Senate and Assembly that would be beneficial for sexual assault survivors and their families.

The 2011-2013 Wisconsin State Budget that was passed this past summer had significant funding cuts to programs that serve sexual assault survivors. The priority of WCASA's policy specialist for this past and for future legislative session is to increase funding for sexual assault service providers (SASPs) and to establish a stable funding source for SASPs. These funding cuts did impact Sexual Assault Services of LSS (SAS). Fortunately, a generous donor contributed the funding difference to SAS for 2012.

The funding source which was cut is the Sexual Assault Victim Services (SAVS) grant out of the Department of Justice. The SAVS grant money is funded through a surcharge on perpetrators. This funding source has experienced a decline in available resources. State legislators and WCASA have requested a review to determine the reasons behind the decrease in funding in support of this grant. WCASA expects to have the results of this review during the spring of 2012. WCASA and legislators are working to find a way to fund SASPs within the general purpose budget which would help to stabilize this funding source for SASPs.

WCASA's legislative agenda also included working to change the mandatory reporting laws in the State of Wisconsin. This involved Act 81, which passed both the Senate and the Assembly and was signed into law by Governor Walker. This law makes it mandatory for all school employees to report any suspected child abuse. The bill basically added the word any school employee to the statute. Previously, mandated reporters were listed as school teacher, administrator or counselor.

The next few bills have been passed by the Senate and Assembly and are waiting for Governor Walker's signature before they will become law.

AB100/SB156 is a bill that increases privacy protections for child sexual assault victims by limiting the defense's access to recordings of child victims engaged in sexually explicit conduct. This bill also makes certain sexual crimes felonies. Under current law, a person who causes a person under the age of 18 to view or listen to sexually explicit conduct is guilty of a felony. Also under current law, a person who communicates via a computer with an individual whom the person believes is under 16 years old with the intent to have sexual intercourse or sexual contact with an individual under 16 years old is guilty

of a felony. This law also makes it a felony to attempt to make a person under the age of 18 view or listen to sexually explicit conduct. It also makes it a felony to attempt to communicate via a computer with an individual whom the person believes is under 16 years old and has the intent to have sexual intercourse or contact with the individual.

Bill AB 232 provides victims with an increased ability to exercise their rights under the crime victim rights statutes. This bill confers upon victims the right to be treated with fairness, dignity, and respect for privacy by public officials, employees, or agencies, the right to be free from intimidation, harassment, discrimination, or abuse by public officials, employees, or agencies, and the right not to have their personally identifying information used by any public official, employee, or agency for the purpose of attempting to obtain a personal benefit or financial gain by the official, employee, or agency. Under the bill, a victim has the right, if his or her rights are violated, to seek relief on his or her own behalf, or may request a District Attorney to seek relief, at the district attorney's discretion, on his or her behalf.

AB 488/SB 394 is a law that establishes merit based pay for Assistant District Attorneys in the State of Wisconsin. Since 2005, turnover rate for ADAs has been over 18% and caseloads have increased 16%. It is crucial for sexual assault cases to have an experienced ADA. This bill establishes a pay progression plan for Assistant District Attorneys, which was required under 2011 Wisconsin Act 32. The pay progression plan shall be based entirely on merit.

AB 552/SB 473 changes the statute of limitations on certain crimes. Under current law, with exceptions, a prosecution for a felony must be commenced within six years of the commission of the felony. Under current law, exceptions include first-degree intentional homicide, second-degree intentional homicide, and first-degree sexual assault of a child. Prosecution of these crimes may be commenced at any time.

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SAS Wish List

- Volunteer Advocates!
- Gift cards/certificates from Target, Office Depot, grocery stores or other discount stores
- Courage to Heal book series
- New clothes are needed for victims to wear when they leave the hospital (victims' clothes are taken for evidence collection, and t-shirts, sweat pants, underwear, etc are needed for them to go home in.)
- Body lotions & shower gels to be given to victims seen at the hospital
- General art and craft supplies for the children in our counseling program
- Bottled water or a water cooler to be used for counseling clients and during volunteer trainings
- Bus tokens so that clients can access our services
- Forever stamps (the kind that do not expire as the rates change)
- Monetary donations are always needed and appreciated



Helping Hands

By Katy Adler

Understanding and Overcoming Challenges to Survivors' Credibility

Sexual assault survivors as a group appear to be some of the most difficult crime victims for many people to believe, and we tend to question the accuracy and authenticity of sexual assaults more than any other crime. There are multiple explanations for why this happens, including public misconceptions of rape and stereotypes of what true rape victims look like. However, there may also be factors present in survivors' statements that make them appear to be less credible. Survivors may make statements that are inconsistent, incomplete, or outright untrue. By understanding why a survivor may make these statements, we will better be able to support survivors and work toward more perpetrators being held accountable for sexual assaults. I will outline some of the explanations for why survivors may make statements that challenge their credibility below, and I will discuss how we can overcome these challenges to help support survivors.

The Impact of Trauma on a Survivor's Report of the Assault

Individuals in trauma can have disorganized and disoriented thinking, and trauma decreases their ability to give information that is complete, consistent, and 100% accurate. Below are a few specific ways that trauma can affect how survivors may recount the assault:

- **Perceptual Narrowing**

While experiencing a trauma, individuals have the tendency to tune in to one sense, shutting out the others (i.e., a survivor may remember smells or touch, but is unable to describe the physical appearance of a setting.) An individual may also focus on one aspect of the trauma, resulting in an inability to describe other details of the situation. For example, if an individual is faced with a gun, he or she may be able to describe the gun in detail, but unable to remember much about the person holding it.

- **Loss of cognitive and motor skills**

Trauma decreases the ability to concentrate and engage in rational decision making. As a result, a survivor may express thoughts or actions either during the assault or afterward that don't seem to make sense to others, and may make them seem less credible.

- **Critical Incident Amnesia**

Trauma can cause some short-term memory impairment. A survivor may simply be unable to recall aspects of the assault.

Additional Factors that Impact a Survivor's Report of the Sexual Assault

There are other factors that may lead to a survivor making incomplete or inconsistent statements about the sexual assault. Some of these are:

- **Discomfort with sexual (or other) details**

A survivor may simply feel uncomfortable revealing details of the sexual assault, particularly to professionals who are collecting

information about the assault.

- **Many disclosures, many different people**

When a survivor discloses that she has been sexually assaulted, she often has to describe what happened to many different people. Even if the survivor does not actually have to describe all the details to all of these people, the anticipation of doing so can be terrifying, and may cause her to distort or leave out certain details of the assault.

- **Fear of doubt and blame**

The survivor may be afraid that she will be doubted or blamed for the sexual assault. In fact, these fears are very well grounded; many sexual assault survivors are not believed or are blamed for the assault. Because of this, survivors often make statements that are not 100% complete or accurate. They may leave out behaviors or actions that were illegal or may be seen as risky. A survivor may also change the description of the assault to make it sound more like "real rape."

- **Fear of being arrested**

The survivor may omit any illegal behavior that he or she may have been involved in at the time of the assault, because of the fear of being arrested.

- **Inconsistencies due to the method of documentation**

Survivors may provide information in a way that doesn't fit with the neat, chronological way that professionals document a crime. Instead, they may present the assault in a way that feels like "snapshots" of the assault to them, perhaps leaping from some part of the assault that felt significant to them, and then bouncing around in time from things that happened at the beginning of the event, and then the end, etc.

All of these factors, combined with the impact of trauma, lead to survivors making statements that are inconsistent, incomplete, and possibly untrue. This often leads to the assumption that the assault did not actually happen, and the survivor is making a false report. However, since the rate of false reports of sexual assault is between four and seven percent, it is unlikely the survivor is fabricating the story of the assault. To overcome these challenges, it is important to first spread knowledge about the facts of sexual assault. The more we inform others about the true dynamics of sexual assault (e.g., most sexual assault survivors have no injury, the perpetrator is most often someone the survivor knows, the rate of false reporting is actually very low, etc.), the less likely we are to blame or disbelieve sexual assault survivors. In turn, this can increase the likelihood that the survivor shares the complete story of the assault.

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SAS Program Statistics July—December 2011

Crisis Line Calls.....	95
Racine Hospital Visits.....	44
Burlington Hospital Visits.....	12
Legal Advocacy Sessions.....	34
New Counseling Clients.....	37
Counseling Sessions.....	407
Community Presentations.....	32
CAC Appointments.....	99



Family Advocate

By Samantha Sustachek

As the Family Support Advocate at the Racine County Child Advocacy Center (CAC), I am often asked questions about sexual development and sexual behaviors in children of various ages. Each caregiver who comes to the CAC receives an informational packet which includes a handout on age appropriate sexual behavior, but I thought that since this is such a challenging subject for many parents, I would address it in this edition of *Branching Out*. This column will discuss both normal and problematic sexual behaviors in children, possible causes of problematic behaviors, and appropriate responses for caregivers and professionals to a range of child sexual behaviors.

According to the National Center on Sexual Behavior of Youth (NCSBY), many sexual behaviors in children are normal and nothing to be concerned about. A typical two- to six-year-old knows that the private parts of boys and girls are different, has labels for those private parts (but will often use slang terms for them), and has some understanding of pregnancy and childbirth. Two- to six-year-olds are not often modest and enjoy being naked. They are curious about private parts and may touch their own private parts (and can experience pleasure from touching them) with no regard for whether or not they are in public. They may also be curious about the body differences between boys and girls, which can lead to activities like "playing doctor" with siblings and peers.

Seven- to twelve-year olds have most likely learned the correct names for private parts (although they may still use slang terms), have gained more knowledge about masturbation, intercourse, and pregnancy, and (by age ten or so) have learned about the physical changes that occur during puberty. Typical seven- to twelve-year-olds may continue sexual play ("playing doctor") with other children they know. During this age range, children often become interested in the opposite sex. They may also develop an interest in and curiosity about sexual content on TV and in movies. They develop a sense of modesty and become shy about undressing in front of others. They also may continue to touch their own private parts, but the growing sense of modesty leads them to do so in private.

Sexual play is listed as a normal behavior for all children ages two through twelve. The NCSBY gives a list of characteristics that define sexual play and separate it from problematic sexual behavior. Sexual play is not associated with fear or anxiety among the participants. It is born of curiosity and is spontaneous and mutually agreed upon. It occurs from time to time among children who often happen to be of similar size, age, and developmental level. These children are often siblings, cousins, or peers. If caregivers catch children in sexual play and ask them to stop, the play will decrease or stop. It can be controlled by increased supervision on the part of caregivers.

Sexual play crosses the line to problematic when it becomes frequent or compulsive instead of happening from time to time or begins to interfere with other activities. Problematic sexual behavior cannot necessarily be controlled when caregivers ask that it stop or provide increased supervision. Whereas sexual play often happens between children who have a previous relationship (siblings, peers, or cousins), sexual behavior may be problematic when it occurs between children who do not know each other well. It may also be a problem if the children are not of similar ages, sizes, or developmental levels. Sexual behavior that is forced, coerced, or aggressive, or causes harm to the child or others is always a problem.

When a child has a sexual behavior problem, the first conclusion many people jump to is that the child has experienced sexual abuse. While some children with sexual behavior problems do have a history of sexual abuse, many do not, and the causes of these behaviors are varied. The National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN) lists many possible causes of child sexual behavior problems. These include exposure to a traumatic experience (abuse, natural disasters, accidents, violence in the home, etc.), repeated exposure to adult sexual activity or nudity in the home (including on TV or the internet), inadequate rules about modesty or privacy in the home, and inadequate caregiver supervision.

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Save the Date for Cones for Kids!

This summer, SAS's sister program SCAN (Stop Child Abuse and Neglect) will hold their second annual fundraiser. This family friendly event will feature ice cream tasting from some of Racine's best ice cream shops as well as a raffle with a chance to win some fantastic prize packs (tickets or gift cards for activities in our area including sporting events, zoos, museums, amusement parks, water parks, theaters, restaurants and more!).

WHEN: Evening of
Thursday, July 12th
WHERE: Mount Pleasant
Lutheran Church, 1700
South Greenbay Rd.
TICKETS: \$5 per person



Early bird event and raffle tickets will be on sale at First Fridays in downtown Racine in May, June and July. For more information or to purchase tickets, you can contact Karen Fetherston at 262-619-1633 or karen.fetherston@lsswis.org.



Meet Carla!

Hi. My name is Carla Pratt and I am a graduate student in Professional Counseling at Concordia University, Wisconsin. I was fortunate enough to be invited to join SAS of LSS on February 1, 2012 as an intern. I have a B.A. in Psychology from Concordia College in Moorhead, MN. After graduating with my B.A., I got married, moved across the country (twice), and eventually raised two wonderful sons. I've always believed that a parent's job is to work him/herself out of a job, and I did. Thus, I decided on a career change! While at SAS I will be helping with counseling, advocacy, preventative presentations to schools and other groups, and daily office administrative tasks. In addition to my internship, I also volunteer with SAS as an advocate responding to the Burlington Hospital. My internship is scheduled to last until the end of August, 2012.

—Carla

9th Annual Take Back the Night

Racine's 9th Annual Take Back the Night will be held on Thursday, April 26th, 2012. The event will be held from 5:00– 7:00 p.m. and will begin at the Racine Public Library and proceed with an awareness march to Olympia Brown Unitarian Universalist Church.

Take Back the Night will include speakers, an open mic speak-out, awareness displays, food, drinks and other activities.



Everyone is invited and encouraged to attend this free community event. So join us at the end of the month and show your support as we work to end sexual violence in our community!

Denim Day is April 25, 2012

This year Sexual Assault Services of LSS (SAS), the Wisconsin Coalition Against Sexual Assault (WCASA) and many other Sexual Assault Service Providers (SASPs) in the state of Wisconsin are working to organize a sexual assault awareness campaign called "Denim Day". National Denim Day is Wednesday, April 25 and is a day where community members, elected officials, businesses and students are asked to make a social statement with their fashion and on this day wear jeans as a visible means of protest against misconceptions that surround sexual assault.

This campaign arose from an overturned sexual assault conviction in Italy. In Italy an 18 year old girl is picked up by her married 45-year old driving instructor for her very first lesson. He takes her to an isolated road and forcefully rapes her. Threatened with death if she tells anyone, he makes her drive the car home. Later that night she tells her parents, and they help and support her to press charges. The perpetrator gets arrested and is prosecuted. He is convicted of rape and sentenced to jail.

He appeals the sentence. The case makes it's all the way to the Italian Supreme Court. Within a matter of days the case against the driving instructor is overturned, dismissed, and the perpetrator released. In a statement by the Chief Judge, he argued, "because the victim wore very, very tight jeans, she had to help him remove them, and by removing the jeans it was no longer rape but consensual sex." Enraged by the verdict, within a matter of hours the women in the Italian Parliament launched into immediate action and protested by wearing jeans to work.

SAS is holding our 9th Annual Take Back the Night (TBTN) on Thursday, April 26 and is encouraging everyone to wear jeans to this year's TBTN, as well as on April 25th. SAS has "Ask Me Why I am Wearing Jeans" stickers that we can distribute to any individuals or agencies who would like to participate in the project. Please contact our office at 262-619-1634 if you have more questions or would like to participate in the event. Also, for more information about Denim Day please see www.denimdayusa.org.

There are many Denim Day events across the state to raise awareness about sexual assault and to protest the many misconceptions surrounding sexual violence. Milwaukee County is hosting a Denim Day event on Wednesday, April 25, 2012 from 4-7pm at Marquette University, Emory Clark Hall, 530 N. 16th St. WCASA is hosting a denim day event in the Senate Parlor Room at the State Capital Building at 11am on April 25th. Please visit this link to find out about more about the events around the state for Denim Day and Sexual Assault Awareness Month activities at <https://wcasa.org/pages/Events-SAAM-DenimDay.php>.



Happy Spring! cont. from page 1

Beyond these events, we are always looking for new Volunteer Advocates to assist in our response to the 24-hour Crisis Line and the Racine and Burlington hospitals. If you, or someone you know is interested in learning more about our Advocate program, please contact our Volunteer Coordinator, Katy Adler at kadler28@lsswis.org or (262) 619-1634.

Thank you for all you do to help make our community a safer place.

Be well,

—Terri

Legislative Update cont. from page 3

Under this bill, first-degree sexual assault of an adult is added to the exceptions so that a prosecution for this offense may be commenced at any time. Also, under the bill, prosecution for attempts to commit first-degree intentional homicide, second-degree intentional homicide, and first-degree sexual assault of an adult or a child may occur at any time.

AB 509/SB 399 changes the rules under which hearsay evidence can be used in preliminary hearings. Under this bill, hearsay evidence is admissible at a preliminary examination. Under the bill, the court may rely on hearsay, in whole or in part, to determine whether there is probable cause that the defendant committed a crime. This can be helpful with sexual assault cases for a variety of reasons, including the victim not having to testify can be beneficial to the victim's healing.

Under AB 262, a person who is convicted of obstructing a law enforcement officer by providing false information to the officer or placing physical evidence with the intent to mislead the officer may be assessed the costs incurred by the law enforcement agency when it investigates or responds to the false information or evidence. This bill was amended to exempt victims of abuse (sexual assault, domestic violence, and stalking) or these victims who recant or omit/provide false information during the course of an investigation.

SB 536 is a bill that changes the statute of limitations (SOL) for prosecuting child trafficking crimes. This bill extends the SOL for the victim from the age of 24 to the age of 45 years old. This bill also allows for parents' rights to be terminated involuntarily if the parent commits the offense of trafficking against any child. This bill also changes laws surrounding possession of child pornography. Under current law, whoever possesses any undeveloped film, photographic negative, photograph, motion picture, videotape, or other recording of a child engaged in sexually explicit conduct is guilty of a felony. This bill adds that a person who knowingly accesses such material is guilty of a felony.

Some of the above information was taken directly from the text of each of these bills.

If you wish to learn more about WCASA's legislative agenda please go to their website at www.wcasa.org and then look under the Policy and Law section. If you would like to be added to the action alert email list, please contact Vicki Biehn at vbiehn@lsswis.org or 262-619-1634. I encourage you to get involved in the legislative process. It can feel very empowering!

—Vicki

Helping Hands cont. from page 4

Additionally, increasing our understanding of how trauma can impact memory and the ability to recount events can assist us with suspending disbelief and working to help survivors report the assault. Most importantly, as support people to sexual assault survivors, we can work to believe survivors and trust their credibility. If we recognize the above reasons as legitimate causes for a victim not appearing credible and work hard to dispel the doubts that arise in our own thoughts, we can focus on providing what the survivor truly needs: non-judgmental, accepting, compassionate support.

This information was taken from a handout titled "Incomplete, Inconsistent, and Untrue Statements Made by Victims: Understanding the causes and overcoming the challenges" by Joanne Archambault and Dr. Kim Lonsway

—Katy



Family Advocate cont. from page 5

If a caregiver or professional observes a child engaging in a sexual behavior, the NCSBY offers the following suggestions:

- Try not to overreact, as many behaviors do fall under the category of normal.
- Do not assume that a child exhibiting a problematic behavior has been sexually abused – there are many possible causes of any given behavior.
- Try increasing supervision, making sure children know the rules, and praising them for appropriate behavior. This is often enough to stop a behavior.
- If the behavior is truly problematic (as defined earlier) a child should be referred for mental health services.
- Some behaviors will require a report to Law Enforcement or the Human Services Department. When this is the case, remember that the goal when a child exhibits a problematic behavior is to find the cause of the behavior, make sure the child is safe, and help the child to correct the behavior.

Many adults do not think of children as sexual beings, and therefore do not expect some of the (often completely normal) behaviors they exhibit. Armed with the proper information, parents, caregivers, and professionals are better equipped to sort out the problematic behaviors from the normal behaviors and intervene when a child may be in danger. Knowledge of child sexual development on the part of the adults who care for them can help to keep all children a little bit safer.

The information in this article is based on the handouts "Understanding and Coping with Sexual Behavior Problems in Children" produced by the National Child Traumatic Stress Network and "Sexual Development and Sexual Behavior Problems in Children Ages 2-12" produced by the National Center on Sexual Behavior of Youth. For more information, see their websites at www.NCTSN.org and www.ncsby.org.

—Sam



Sexual Assault Services
1220 Mound Ave., Suite 304
Racine, WI 53404

Contact Us!

SAS Racine Office
1220 Mound Ave. Suite 304
Racine, WI 53404
262-619-1634

SAS Burlington Office
480 S. Pine St.
Burlington, WI 53105
262-763-6226 Ext. 109

24 Hour Crisis Line: 262-637-SAFE (7233)

Stay Connected!



Join our News and Events email update list! Would you like to receive information on upcoming SAS events and volunteer opportunities? Email Samantha Sustachek at ssustachek@lsswis.org with "SAS news and events" in the subject line and she will include you in all SAS news and events related emails.

Sexual Assault Services seeks to create a safe and compassionate environment to help promote the healing of sexual assault survivors and their support people.

Sexual Assault Services is funded by United Way of Racine County, Victims of Crime Act grant, Sexual Assault Victim Services grant, Violence Against Women Act grant and the Wisconsin Coalition Against Sexual Assault.